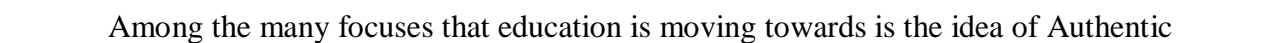


Guidance



Authentic Curriculum has been something that has been talked about since the very

what was most commonly valued: basic literacy, colonial manners, and basic math. The Protestant Bible was also essential learning. Many schools later moved to include vocational training, and by the time of the 1950s, schools had an expansive curriculum designed to socialize students not just in a broad set of values, but also in very specific social behavior. Constantly people have been looking for new and unique ways of approaching topics in school, and helping students become life-long learners and productive citizens. One of the trends that stretches back to Aristotle is the concept of learning through doing. (Edutopia.org) This idea became more of a concept in education in the half of a century through career training and practice in fields like engineering and medicine. Eventually the benefits of practical usage were adapted into K-12 education, modelling field training in using open ended questions to help explore topics in very real ways and come to any number of conclusions. (Edutopia.org) Service learning is fairly similar, where students are interacting with their community or other communities that pertain to their topic, generally for the benefit of both. While this is being done, students are researching, and working in practical ways to answer questions or explore new fields of study.

Most examples of authentic curriculum work within what are America's traditional standards. Tigard High School in Oregon, encourages the use of diverse instructional techniques to teach somewhat unexplored parts of content to adhere to state standards, as see here from a lesson plan outline:

http://ths.ttsdschools.org/files/_nBCGl_/c6c3b94c5770dfa63745a49013852ec4/Unit_4_Doc_Revolutions.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtTKuBZ-nvY>

The content here is the Revolutions of China, Russia and Mexico, which satisfy the standard of knowing about world history, but focuses on fairly small spans of time and place and has a

traditional chronological narrative. But in the classrooms, the content is taught with videos, pictures, songs, and physical activities to engage students.

Many schools have found success in implementing types of authentic curriculum into their classes, but every school takes a different approach. Some use it to help get students into new communities and see new perspectives, and some use it to help prevent dropout rates, like the Independent School Project. How schools implement and design these programs is also what makes them unique and authentic. In many cases, the students themselves are in charge of shaping the way these programs are integrated into their classrooms. Sometimes they are running the entire program and using the teachers as resources and connections to things in school they need extra help getting access to. This creates a very different relationship in the way it works with a traditional education, but it isn't necessarily a complicated one. Because many of these programs place the students as the ones responsible for their focus on what to learn, often it falls on the teacher to make connections between their focus and the standards they need to meet. Students are then as academically accomplished as the average student, but are more invested in their learning because it takes such a personal focus.

Generally educators find using this method to deem positive results for their students, but there are many challenges that come along with Project Based Learning in the classroom. First of all, teachers take on a new role, becoming more as advisers on researching methods and subjects to explore rather than lecturers filled with content knowledge. This takes the teachers out of the role of experts, which can be difficult for many teachers with a traditional view of education. PBL also incorporates a large degree of technology, especially in trying to connect its students with things beyond their immediate surroundings, to take a more worldly view. This requires access to technology inside and outside of the classroom for both teachers and students and

means that each should feel confident and capable in using programs by themselves to guide their research.

Authentic Curriculum can be easily categorized when looking at the four different teaching philosophies. It definitely veers away from the more teacher-centered philosophies like Idealism and Realism and crosses into the student-centered realms of Pragmatism and Existentialism. More specifically, because Authentic Curriculum puts an emphasis on learning through experiences, interdisciplinary approach for problem solving and using the community to help shape student's learning, it is more likely to fall into a pragmatic approach. There are components that point towards existentialism, because generally authentic programming likes to bring the focus back to the individual student's needs, but overall, the goals of authentic curriculum are to continue to give the student a community based learning experience that allows them to pinpoint a focus. This, again, points towards a pragmatic approach. Authentic curriculum does have rather broad goals to accomplish, but acts wherever possible to make that compatible with what students want and in a way that suits their learning style. Realism believes in a fixed physical reality that needs to be understood, and depends on children's natural curiosity to teach. Thus, it essentially puts the cart in front of the horse. Pragmatism shares the hands-on method, but different goals: the ability to adapt to constant change, as pragmatism believes that ultimate reality is constructed by the observer, and exists as a process.

Since we believed in the effectiveness and value of authentic curriculum, part of our main focus of this research was the design or implement process of the curriculum. In *Facilitating authentic learning, grades 6 - 12: a framework for student-driven instruction* by Laura R. Thomas, the approach of authentic learning was phrased as the "Next Generation Instruction." In the book, Greenstein broke down the "Next Generation Instruction" into

manageable stages. Before anything changes happens in the classroom, the teachers have to understand that the Next Generation Instruction shifts the teachers' role from being an instructor to a facilitator. A teacher goes from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side," which puts more give responsibilities to students for their own learning. (Thomas, 2013). The first and foremost practice in setting the stage for student-driven instruction is to develop a "Collaborative Learning Community (CLC)." This environment needs to be maintained throughout every step of the learning process. After setting up the CLC, the first step of Next Generation Instruction is Aiming. It is similar to Stage 1 in the UMF lesson planning format, in which the teacher clarifies the goals, pinpoints skills and methods the lesson pertains. Step two is Framing, in which the teacher introduces the lesson and reveal the hook. Step three is Gaming, where the responsibility is transferred from the teacher to students. In this step, "the work of creating, collaborating, asking, and processing--in short, the work of learning--takes places." (Thomas, Page 67) Step four is Claiming, or reflection, where assessments, debriefing and synthesis take place. Step five is Exclaiming, or celebration, where students' products are shared or published, and their effort and learning are celebrated. Thomas offered a systematic approach to authentic curriculum planning and implementing. This book would be useful for project-based learning in my class because of the included insights from other "facilitators" regarding their experience and techniques.

We had some concerns about authentic curriculum when first started the research. First of all, how could use authentic-curriculum to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? CCSS emphasizes not only teaching facts to students, but also how to apply those facts to new situations. Authentic curriculum encourage collaboration and group learning for students to develop and practice their problem solving skills while utilize their learning. (Thomas, 2013) As

a result of authentic curriculum, students are more competent in recall of information and application. Another concern was assessment. How could we design the appropriate lesson and assessment to evaluate students' learning, content knowledge and skills? In her book, *Assessing 21st century skills: a guide to evaluating mastery and authentic learning*, Laura Greenstein organized the essential 21st century skills in three categories, thinking, acting and living in the world. Each categories contains multiple skills we hope students would develop, including critical thinking, problem solving, metacognition, communication, global understanding, etc. Solid backward lesson design, specific and clear rubrics, authentic and flexible assessment are essential in supporting students develop the comprehensive list of skills.

Overall, authentic curriculum seems to be where education is headed, and although implementing it may be challenging at times, people are obviously seeing great benefits to exploring this and using it with their students.

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